



Michael Sobell Sinai School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101549
Local Authority Brent
Inspection number 276534
Inspection dates 8–9 January 2007
Reporting inspector Nicola Davies

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Shakespeare Drive
School category	Voluntary aided		Kenton
Age range of pupils	3–11		Harrow HA3 9UD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02082041550
Number on roll (school)	662	Fax number	02089050260
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Clive Goodman
		Headteacher	Mrs Vivienne Orloff
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2000		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large, voluntary aided Modern Orthodox Jewish primary school is located in Kenton but serves the Jewish community from a much wider area. It is the largest Jewish primary school in Europe. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is higher than average. The school has a growing proportion of pupils who are learning English as an additional language. It has the Healthy Schools and Investors in People awards.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Michael Sobell Sinai is a good school. It aims to provide its pupils with 'the essential skills for their future lives' and succeeds well. Its strong ethos contributes well to pupils' learning and understanding as well as to their well-being. Pupils are well looked after by the school and, as a result, are happy, secure and at ease with themselves. From their earliest days in the good Foundation Stage, children are encouraged to work hard and learn well. But equally, they enjoy the lively playtimes and breaks where they play and socialise together safely. The school ensures that everyone gets a good start to their time at the school whether they join in the nursery or at a later stage. For example, pupils who join from overseas are well supported and included in the life of the school.

Pupils enjoy lessons and work hard because teaching throughout the school is good. The good curriculum meets pupils' needs well and supports their achievement. A strong focus on personal, social, citizenship and health education contributes to the ethos of the school and its impact can be seen in the respect which pupils show for each other. The curriculum also includes special theme weeks or events which help to draw attention to areas the school is developing. One successful example was the recent Indian week which helped pupils to learn more about other cultures to prepare them for their future lives. Parents are generally supportive of the school. However a small minority do not feel they are well enough involved in their child's education despite the increasing range of opportunities the school provides.

The good teaching and support at the school is developed by staff sharing their skills for the benefit of the pupils. For example, senior staff and other teachers provide support for less experienced colleagues. Similarly, good quality information helps the school use its resources well. The impact of this can be seen in the good progress which pupils make. Standards are above average and most pupils achieve well. Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities are included well and benefit from extra help from skilled adults which helps them to enjoy their learning and do well. However, there are weaker areas, of which the school is well aware. Not all teachers consistently challenge the more able pupils well enough in lessons. Similarly, although tracking of pupils' progress by teachers is good, pupils are not often involved in reviewing the progress they make in lessons or against their targets.

Leadership and management are good. The effective headteacher has built a close knit team of senior teachers, staff and governors who share a common vision for the school. Accurate self evaluation highlights clear areas for development which are pursued with determination. This clarity contributes well to the school's good capacity to improve. It also means that pupils are clear about what is expected of them. As a result, the school is a well ordered and calm community where pupils learn and thrive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that activities for more able pupils are consistently challenging and stimulating.

- Involve pupils consistently in judging their own progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the nursery with knowledge and skills similar to other children of their age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage and this continues across the school. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average overall. Given pupils' starting points, this means achievement is good overall and almost all pupils reach the targets that are set for them. For example, in the most recent national tests, almost all pupils reached nationally expected levels in English and half of the pupils achieved at higher levels. The school has rightly identified that aspects of progress could be improved, for example, in science and for more able pupils in some areas. The school has addressed these well through a more rigorous whole school approach to tracking pupils' progress which demonstrates that current pupils are making expected or better progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress and there are no significant differences in the achievement of girls and boys.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They are confident, have very positive attitudes and behave well both in lessons and in the playground. They have a satisfactory understanding of the diversity of cultures in British society. They learn to co-operate with each other and work well as a team through various activities, clubs and community events. As a result they leave the school as mature and sensible pupils, well adjusted for their next stage of learning.

They have a good understanding of the need to stay healthy, for instance through balanced eating and participation in the range of physical education activities on offer. Pupils enjoy school a good deal and feel safe. Their attendance is above average despite the distances that many pupils travel. Pupils say that they appreciate the use of the suggestion box and make a positive contribution to their own school community through the school council. As one member of the school council stated, 'We are the voice of our class' and another added, 'We make the school a better place'. Opportunities for fund raising at charity events contribute further to pupils' personal qualities that will eventually help them gain knowledge about working roles in future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils are keen and their attitudes to learning are very good. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and explain clearly what the pupils are to learn and do. Consequently pupils make good progress in their learning in lessons. Pupils particularly enjoy opportunities to develop their communication and social skills through challenging group and individual work activities. For example, Year 6 pupils relished the opportunity to construct a balanced argument about keeping animals in captivity through a small group discussion. Similarly, pupils in Year 5 enjoyed investigating spelling rules and developing sentences to test these such as 'couplets about cringing cows'. However, teachers do not always plan as well for more able pupils and opportunities are sometimes missed to extend these pupils through collaborative or investigative activities. Committed, experienced teachers and additional staff work well together to help pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils are helped to improve through their teachers' constructive marking.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good because it meets the needs of pupils well and supports their achievement. Basic skills are well covered, helping pupils to achieve well in these subjects and preparing them well for their future. Good links are made between pupils' secular learning and learning in Jewish Studies, which accounts for a quarter of curriculum time.

Pupils and staff enjoy working with computers and interactive whiteboards and provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the time of the last inspection. The school now has a modern computer suite in place, serviced by its own technician. Although science provision has improved, the school is developing the subject further through science events and more opportunities for pupils to work on investigations. There is a good range of extra curricular activities provided such as sports and music clubs and the ICT lunchtime club is usually full. The school recently held a successful Indian week for pupils and cultural diversity is now being included in curriculum planning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support is good. Child protection procedures, risk assessments and provision for children's security are excellent. Good monitoring procedures ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those learning English as an additional language are identified and well supported by additional staff. The school has good links with specialist support agencies, including Jewish special needs organisations. Although the school tracks pupils' progress well, not all pupils

consistently know how to improve their work or are aware of their targets. Some parents feel they do not have enough information about how their children are doing.

Children are supported well in their transfer between year groups and in their progress on to secondary schools. A new counselling and support scheme has proved very popular with pupils and ensures they are able to talk to staff about any concerns they have. The school has few incidents of racist behaviour but does not report these routinely to the governing body.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Leaders and managers across the school share a common vision and are dedicated to improving standards. The effective headteacher has developed a thorough process for identifying areas which could be improved. For example, teachers with responsibilities for different subjects or areas have opportunities and time to observe colleagues' teaching. This helps staff share good practice and identify areas where the school could do better still. This approach has led, for example, to considerable improvements in the Foundation Stage. It has also helped to identify a need to give pupils further opportunities to investigate in science. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. It involves staff and governors well across this large school. The school identified that it needed to make better use of information about pupils' progress. As a result it recently refined its monitoring system and is developing opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own learning which are not yet consistent across the school. Governors are well involved in school life and help the school continue to improve by 'holding it to account'.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We enjoyed seeing how you worked and talking to many of you around the school. We don't have space here to tell you everything we found out but we have included some of the main points in this letter.

We agree with you and your teachers that you go to a good school. You told us you enjoy school and we were particularly pleased to hear from your school council that you help to make the school a better place. We could see that you all behave well in lessons and around the school which is one of the reasons why you feel safe and happy. The adults at the school take good care of you. They are keen to make sure that they help all of you do as well as you can. One of the ways they do this is by sharing with each other what they do really well and sharing their good ideas in different subjects and lessons. This is why you enjoy your lessons and make good progress.

We have suggested two ways in which your school can get even better. We saw how much you enjoy your work when your teachers challenge you to think really hard, so we have asked them to make sure they always do that. We would also like to see more opportunities for you to judge and comment on how well you think you have done in lessons and how well you have achieved your targets.

We wish you the best for the future.

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector